DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 202 069 CS 503 372

AUTHOR Baile, Susan
TITLE A Constructivist Analysis of Relationship Development.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Communication Association (Pittsburgh, PA, April 24-26, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Research; *Interpersonal Attraction; *Interpersonal Relationship; Theories
IDENTIFIERS *Constructivism

ABSTRACT

Noting that communication scholars have begun to sense the inadequacy of traditional theoretic perspectives to frame the sorts of questions and answers required for a fully articulated theory of interpersonal attraction and relationship development, this paper explores the possibility of applying constructivism to that area. (It defines the constructivist perspective as that in which humans are characterized as scientists who continually form hypotheses against which to test the reality of experiences.) The paper first examines the main considerations of the theoretic perspective termed "variable analysis" and suggests how they are contradicted by the constructivist perspective. The paper then discusses the contributions that constructivism can make to both theory and research in the area of attraction and relationship development, arguing that it can provide a coherent integration of the disparate strands of research in the field and that it has the power to articulate an internally consistent theory capable of explaining differential effects as a function of differences in individual constructs and relationship stages. (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED202069

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

A CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

by

Susan Baile

University of Hartford

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Susan Baile

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the annual convention of the

Eastern Communication Association
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
April, 1981

CS 503 372

Interest in the dynamics of interpersonal attraction and relationship development is shared by both academician and layman alike. The swelling body of literature reported in professional journals and the proliferation of "how to" articles in popular publications are testimonials to the intrinsically compelling nature of the topic. Yet despite the persistent and often ingenious attempts to penetrate the seemingly unfathomable mysteries of the process of attraction and relationship development, an overview of the literature suggests that our understanding of these phenomena is still far from complete.

Without wishing to oversimplify the nature of the problem, I would like to suggest that a significant obstacle to progress in these investigations may rest in the choice of theoretic perspective from which to study the phenomena of interpersonal attraction and relationship development. The adoption of any theoretic perspective for research necessarily defines both the questions that can be asked and the answers that can be formulated. Recently, more and more scholars have begun to sense the inadequacy of traditional theoretic perspectives to frame the sorts of questions and answers required for a fully articulated theory of interpersonal attraction and relationship development. As a result many scholars and researchers have become more receptive to the advantages accrued from conducting research from within alternative perspectives. The intent of this paper is to explore the fruitfulness of applying one of these alternatives, constructivism, to the area of interpersonal attraction and relationship development.

Theory and research in the area of interpersonal attraction and relationship development is guided by two fundamental questions: 1) why do people form attachments to others at all, and 2) why do they form whatever particular

attachments they do form? Traditionally, the attempts to answer these questions have been channeled into separate lines of investigations. The first question has been addressed primarily by explorations of what has been called man's affiliative need, and the second by studies of impression formation, person perception, interpersonal attraction, attribution theory and relationship development. It is the results of the latter body of studies that are of interest in the present paper.

Duck has noted that traditional literature has placed "mere acquaintance" and "friendship" like bookends on either end of the process of relationship development (1973). In between are "volumes" of particular attributes or processes presumed to act as causal agents or determinants of attraction and relationship development. That is, the bulk of the literature has assumed that certain specifiable factors operate to cause attraction. Attempts to identify these factors have resulted in the development of several theories of attraction: 1) Reciprocity of liking, 2) Matching, 3) Stimulus-value-role theory, 4) Complementarity of needs, 5) Similarity, and 6) Social exchange theory (see the appendix for brief summaries of each theoretical perspective; the summaries are based on Duck's (1973) treatment of this subject).

The theories listed above do not represent an exhaustive survey of those available, but together they do include the bulk of the perspectives out of which research on interpersonal attraction and relationship development has been conducted. The fact that stands out most sharply when these efforts are considered as a whole is that once those theories either failing to receive consistent experimental support or proving to be deficient in explanatory or predictive power are laid aside, we are basically left with the similarity hypothesis. This is a somewhat disheartening recognition, since folk wisdom has long proclaimed that birds of a feather flock together! This comment,

however, should not be taken to imply that the long research tradition in this area has been undertaken in vain. Still, it does seem important to recognize the gaping chasm between the persistence and intensity of investigative efforts and their subsequent lack of theoretical fecundity.

As stated earlier, a major deficiency in this literature may be traced to the theoretic perspective from which it is undertaken. The overwhelming majority of the studies designed to test the theories specified above fall under the theoretic perspective labeled "variable analysis" by Delia (1977), or the covering law approach by Berger (1977). Some of the main considerations influencing the research designs underlying this approach include:

1) Individual interpretive processes are not legitimate research concerns; moreover, they can be neither conceptualized nor measured.

2) It is necessary to create clean, discrete variables in order to perform clean, discrete analyses of data.

3) It is possible to lift an interaction out of its normally occurring context and still assume the observed behaviors would be the same as those occurring in an actual encounter.

4) There is some inherent meaning in independent variables.

5) Measurement scales and behavioral indices are equally applicable and interpretable across persons and contexts.

6) It is possible to discover the mechanisms underlying the operations of the whole by separately analyzing the operations of its parts.

7) Understanding a complex phenomenon is possible as long as all the relevant variables are included in the design; moreover, it is theoretically possible to expect such inclusive designs.

8) At the core, man is essentially a passive, reactive mechanism whose

behavior will ultimately prove to be capable of predictability.

In recent years, all of these considerations have come to be seriously challenged by the contextualist theoretical perspective, which holds as its most basic postulate that man is essentially an active creator (construer) of reality. In the discipline of speech communication we have been mouthing claims such as, "Speech is an instrument of choice;" "Meanings are in people, not words;" and "Communication is an irreversible process," for quite a while now, with no one doubting their validity. Yet plainly the implications of such assertions, which stem from the contextualist perspective, have not been manifested in the necessarily different methodological decisions they mandate.

No doubt this state of disharmony is the natural accompaniment to the birth of any new paradigm, but this is no justification for enduring a needlessly long labor. Extending the metaphor a bit further, I think it would be wise to recognize that the variable analytic perspective, after years of commendable fertility and productivity, appears to have become barren. It is not that she has become useless, but rather that her role must be transformed to accommodate the challenge of the contextualist perspective.

In the discipline of speech communication the contextualist perspective has assumed the particular form of constructivism. The remainder of this paper will attempt to demonstrate the utility of applying this theoretic perspective to theory and research in interpersonal attraction and relationship development. The strategy for accomplishing this will be to examine several of the eight considerations influencing research from the variable analytic perspective discussed above, and suggest how they are contradicted by the constructivist perspective. Whenever possible, empirical data will be cited to reinforce the superiority claimed for constructivism.

1. Individual interpretive processes are not legitimate research concerns; moreover they can be neither conceptualized nor measured. It is self-evident that the variable analytic tradition is forced to exclude anything not directly observable (i.e., individual interpretive processes) from its assumptions. If it did not, it would be hard to argue that the independent variables under investigation did in fact cause the observed effects, and being able to formulate and substantiate such claims is what this line of research is all about.

In contrast, individual interpretive processes function as the heart of constructivism. In elaborating on the central role of these processes, Delia has written that, "...knowledge is necessarily rooted within individually and socially constituted symbolic structures...while events exist independently of any concepts, events can only be known through the application of concepts" (Delia, 1977, p. 69). Given this assumption, any discussion of the legitimacy or illegitimacy of incorporating individual interpretive processes into research efforts becomes nonsensical.

A more relevant discussion, instead, would focus on just how this can be achieved. One obvious possibility is to allow subjects to generate their own constructs - either formally by utilizing the Reptest or informally by soliciting unstructured written responses. This procedures is, of course, routinely used among researchers of the constructivist persuasion (see, for example, O'Keefe and Delia, 1979; Delia, Kline and Burleson, 1979; Clark, 1979; Delia, Clark and Switzer, 1979; Ritter, 1979). Another possibility is to combine different techniques, as was done by most of the studies conducted by Duck (1973). Here, subjects used their own definitions of friendship when filling out instruments, but subsequently their choices were validated by establishing mutuality through a sociometric analysis.

Perhaps the most compelling argument for including individual interpretive processes in research comes from the literature on experimenter effects. Since Rosenthal's original study, a growing list of cases where the subject's interpretation of the experimental situation significantly affected his or her behavior has been accumulating (see Rosenthal and Rosnow, 1969). Incorporating this factor into our research designs will doubtlessly temper the power and generalizability of our findings, but to ignore it because of the inconvenience created is to risk "making subjects dummy to the researcher's ventriloquism," to borrow a well-turned phrase from Delia (1977).

2. It is necessary to create clean, discrete variables in order to perform clean, discrete analyses of data. Again, with this assumption the variable analytic tradition is sacrificing the richness of reality on the altar of statistical analysis. Further, since one ultimate aim of scientific endeavor is pragmatic applicability, such devastation is clearly carried out at the feet of a false god. Communication variables are seldom clean and discrete! For instance, Delia has observed that in the process of constructing another person's role, the unifying element is located in the evaluation of the purpose or sentiment of the other. Thus, for example, in testing the similarity hypothesis the presentation of attitude similarity by one person to another could lead as often to repulsion as attraction, if the perceiver infers that his or her partner's purpose in the interaction is to feign agreement in order to manipulate his or her behavior in some way (Jones et al, 1968). Research on the effects of self-disclosure on interpersonal attraction similarly suggests that recipients' responses to disclosure are influenced by inferences about the discloser's motivations and intentions for disclosing (Jones and Gordon, 1972; Baile, 1981).

3. It is possible to lift an interaction out of its normally occurring context and still assume the observed behaviors would be the same as those

occurring in an actual encounter. The inaccuracy of this assumption is in its failure to account for the all-important role of context in influencing interaction. Many examples are available to support this point. Rubin has cited evidence that different information is exchanged in different contexts. More particularly, the greater the specificity of the context, the more likely information exchanged will focus on the contextual setting itself (1978). Delia, too, has pointed to the fact that the emphasis of our models of relationship development on decision-making based on conscious assessments of similarity and cost/reward ratios has tended to obscure the powerful role of social context in structuring relationship decisions and development. He goes further to suggest as a basic principle of relationship development that "Relational satisfaction and relational development are rooted in implicit judgments of the other person; these judgments vary with the context and the trajectory of the relation" (1980, p. 100). Context is an expansive concept that includes factors as diverse as interaction expectancy, physical setting, temporal position, social setting, roles, short and long-term needs, nature of activity, etc. Thus, context will inevitably resist efforts made to control it. However, this is not something about which we are entitled to exercise choice, since the research is unequivocal in identifying context as a significant influence on interaction.

4. There is some inherent meaning in our independent variables. Perhaps enough has already been said to establish the folly of operating with this assumption. One of the gravest illusions of the variable analytic perspective is that in the act of naming a thing we have also discovered a fact of nature. The illusory quality of this process can be revealed at several levels of analysis. First, consider Festinger's distinction between objective and social reality, in which social reality is distinguished by its basis in consensus.

Although Festinger's formulations at least acknowledge the consensual (vs. "factual") roots of social reality, they fall short in not recognizing that even "objective" reality is fundamentally consensual. That is, we've had to agree to call a certain distance an inch, and then to call twelve of them a foot, etc. As Duck has pointed out, the primary difference between the two forms of reality is in the degree but not the fact of their potential contentiousness.

Second, even though the research onattraction and relationship development has assumed that people possess inherent qualities that render them either attractive or unattractive to others, it is equally defensible to assert that people infer the presence of qualities in others from observations and evaluations of their own behavior in the presence of those others (Bem, 1972). In other words, it is as plausible to state that "Since I feel nervous and insecure around X, he/she must be an intimidating person," as to say, "X is an intimidating person." Indeed, we can never truly know others, but only our experience of them, which by definition is always ourselves. Therefore it seems likely that any and every attribution and inference we make regarding another must be largely if not solely the projection of ourselves onto the other at some level.

Finally, the position that there is inherent meaning in experimental stimuli is undermined by much research. One example at a very mundane level is the research of Argyle and McHenry (1971) in which the researchers were interested in discovering the stereotypes of people with glasses. These investigators found significant differences in perceptions when the subjects viewed videotapes as compared to when they simply responded to photographs (the subjects reported commonly held stereotypes of people with glasses when responding to a

photograph (i.e., the person was perceived as intelligent), but not when they responded to five-minute videotapes).

Many examples from the self-disclosure literature can also be mentioned in this regard. One problem plaguing this literature is that of accurately manipulating the degree of intimacy of experimental disclosures. First, it has been established that sex often affects the perceptions of disclosure intimacy (Rubin and Shenker, 1975; Spinner and Colwell, 1978). Other factors affecting perceptions of disclosure intimacy are the nature of the relationship and the context in which disclosure occurs (Simmel, 1950; Ruesch, 1973; Sermat and Smyth, 1973), and the manner in which disclosures are articulated (Shimkunas, 1972; Chelune, 1975; Baile, 1981). These examples are only a few among the multitude that could have been selected.

This discussion has so far been limited to a critical evaluation of the extant literature on attraction and relationship development. There is no doubt that an unabridged version of such an enterprise could readily fill a book. However, criticism can too easily become a cheap commodity; it is reasonable to ask what constructivism can create as well as what it can condemn. Fortunately, there is ample evidence to suggest that constructivism can make significant contributions to both theory and research in the area of attraction and relationship development, and it is to the documentation of these contributions that we now turn.

From the constructivist perspective man is characterized as a scientist who continually forms hypotheses against which to test the reality of his experiences. Because it is impossible to directly confirm these hypotheses without literally seeing into other peoples' heads, we seek to validate our inferences by comparing them to those of others. Earlier it was stated that the two basic questions underlying research on attraction and relationship development are: 1) why do we form attachments to other people at all, and

2) why do we form whatever particular attachments we do form? Constructivism provides a theoretical explanation that integrates both questions by positing that 1) we form all social relationships in order to gain the consensus desirable for facilitating predictability of the world, and 2) we select particular pairings because by their consensus they validate some of our more subtle hypotheses about the world. Hence, all relationships are based on the consensual validation of hypotheses about the world, and these hypotheses can be structure such that they reflect increasingly contentious levels of reality:

a) objective - agreeing that an object is there at all

b) linguistic - accepting conventional linguistic usages - i.e., "these are kittens"

c) cultural-normative - applying to widely accepted "convenience rules" - i.e., 12 inches is equivalent to 1 foot

d) social-comparative - comparing oneself to the opinions of others

e) purely social - opinions and preferences

Against this conceptual backdrop, it is easy to understand the role of similarity in attraction and relationship development. As Duck has stated, similarity is not simply beguiling, but functionally necessary. "It provides a measure of social reality, cements (his) subjective interpretations and categorization of that which is outside and reinforces (his) subjective structuring of experience" (1973, p. 26). It is clear, then, that the constructivist theoretic perspective places similarity directly at the center of a theory of attraction and relationship development, but this fact does little to distinguish constructivism from the variable analytic tradition. To see the unique contributions of constructivism it is best to turn to Duck's extensive attempts to develop a theory of similarity and relationship development based on this perspective.

Duck's first departure from tradition consists of his view that relationships develop not because of the presence of positive, causative factors but instead because of the absence of negatively evaluated data and the simultaneous disclosure of psychological similarity. Thus he conceptualizes all relationships as potential friendships that will fail to develop only if something intervenes to prevent them. Since the constructivist view presumes that the discovery and sharing of similarity is the primary function served by relationships, the "something" that intervenes is hypothesized to be a set of selective filters which assist the individual in his or her inference-making regarding the similarity/dissimilarity of others. Duck identifies three basic assumptions of filtering theory: 1) there are stages in the process of relationship development, 2) the cues on which a person's filters operate are subject to emphatic fluctuations, and 3) each of the preceding processes functions in the context of the individual's evaluation and interpretation of his or her perceptions.

There are several important implications that arise from these assumptions. First, if there are indeed stages in the process of relationship development, it is obvious that we will not be able to isolate one single paradigm case of the interaction process for study, and the notion of stages must somehow be incorporated into our methodologies. Second, assuming that different cues become salient at different stages of relationship development, it is clear that to conceive of the effects of similarity in terms of generally operative, discrete attributes or attitudes is conceptually inadequate. Instead, the third assumption argues that since from the constructivist perspective our knowledge and experience are defined not directly bu the events of our lives but by our applications of concepts to those events, it is evident that similarity between people is the product not of similar events but similar

construals of events. This suggests that the most effective measure of similarity is likely to be an instrument such as the Reptest that identifies individual constructs. Furthermore, the equivocality of research findings regarding the influence of different types of similarities on attraction and relationship development may be better understood when this criterion for similarity is applied.

The several studies of the filtering hypothesis reported by Duck provide convincing support for its utility in theory development and research on attraction and relationship development. The constraints of this paper preclude the possibility of providing a detailed discussion of these studies, but some of his major findings will be listed:

1. The Reptest was found to differentiate between friendship pairs and nominal pairs with significantly greater accuracy than a measure of attitude similarity.
2. The Reptest was found to differentiate between friendship and nominal pairs with significantly greater accuracy than a measure of personality.
3. After having completed a Reptest, subjects were relatively accurate in identifying acquaintances who would use those same constructs in any context, and 93.7% of the errors made were accounted for by overestimations of similarity.
4. Results of a longitudinal study strongly support the assumption that similarity precedes friendship development. However, different types or levels of similarity are implicated at different stages of relationship development. The three types or levels suggested by the research are:
    a. Factual, literal or role characteristics (demographics, physical appearance, social roles, etc.)

b. Interactional (including conscructs such as talkative/quiet, warm/aloof, ecc.)

c. Psychological (including constructs such as ambitious/not ambitious; interested in others/ self-concerned, etc.)

Apparently, the initial, more "factual" similarities are important more for the psychological similarities they are taken to imply than for any inherent value of their own.

5. Support for the generalizations above were generated by a study which found that subjects used a significantly greater number of psychological constructs to describe intimate friends than acquaintances, and significantly more role constructs to describe acquaintances than intimate friends.

6. Subjects' constructs of strangers were significantly different depending on whether they interacted with them in a casual or social group and did or did not expect future interaction with them.

The findings summarized above represent only the beginnings of the contributions to be made by adopting the constructivist theoretic perspective for research on attraction and relationship development. Two outstanding strengths offered by this perspective are its ability to provide a coherent integration of the disparate strands of research in the literature to date, and its power to articulate an internally consistent theory capable of explaining differential effects as a function of differences in individual constructs and stages of relationship. By themselves, I think these two qualities are sufficiently compelling justification for the adoption of the constructivist paradigm for research in this area; when in addition the staleness of the research undertaken from the covering laws approach is considered, a far more debatable issue may well be the justification for not adopting it.

REFERENCES

Altman, I. and Taylor, D.A. Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relations (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973).

Aronson, E. and Linder, D. "Gain and Loss of Esteem as Determinants of Interpersonal Attractiveness." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 1, 1965.

Baile, S. M. "Self-Disclosure: Factors Affecting Interpersonal Attraction and Perceived Appropriateness." Unpublished Dissertation, University of Kansas, 1981.

Berger, C.R. "The Covering Law Perspective as a Theoretical Basis for the Study of Human Communication." Communication Quarterly, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1977.

Berscheid, E. and Walster, E. Interpersonal Attraction (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1969).

Berscheid, E., Dion, K., Walster, E. and Walster, G.W. "Physical Attractiveness and Dating Choice: A Test of the Matching Hypothesis." Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 7, 1971.

Bixenstine, V.E., Potash, H.M. and Wilson, K.V. "Effects of Level of Cooperative Choice by the Other Player on Choices in a Prisoner's Dilemma Game. Part I." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 66, 1963.

Byrne, D., Clore, G.L., Jr., and Worchel, P. "Effects of Economic Similarity - Dissimilarity on Interpersonal Attraction." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 4, 1966.

Byrne, D., Griffitt, W., and Stefaniak, D. "Attraction and Similarity of Personality Characteristics." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 5, 1967.

Centers, R. "The Completion Hypothesis and the Compensatory Dynamic in Interpersonal Attraction and Love." Journal of Psychology, Vol. 82, 1972.

Chelune, G. "Self-Disclosure: An Elaboration of Its Basic Dimensions." Psychological Reports, Vol. 36, 1975.

Clark, R.A. "The Impact of Self Interest and Desire for Liking on the Selection of Communicative Strategies." Communication Monographs, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1979.

Cohen, A.R. "Experimental Effects of Ego-Defense Preference on Interpersonal Relations." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 52, 1956.

Crockett, W.H. "Theoretical Explorations of the Process of Initial Interactions: Introduction." Western Journal of Speech, Vol. 44, No. 2, 1980.

Delia, J.G. "Constructivism and the Study of Human Communication." Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. 63, 1977.

_____. "Some Tentative Thoughts Concerning the Study of Interpersonal Relationships and Their Development." Western Journal of Speech Communication, Vol. 44, No. 2, 1980.

Delia, J.G., Clark, R.A. and Switzer, D.E. "The Content of Informal Conversations as a Function of Interactants' Interpersonal Cognitive Complexity." Communication Monographs, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1979.

Delia, J.G., Kline, S.L. and Curleson, B.R. "The Development of Persuasive Communication Strategies in Kindergarteners Through Twelfth-Graders." Communication Monographs, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1979.

Duck, S.W. and Spencer, C.P. "Personal Constructs and Friendship Formation." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 23, 1972.

Duck, S.W. Personal Relationships and Personal Constructs: A Study of Friendship Formation (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1973).

Gilchrist, J.C. "The Formation of Social Groups Under Conditions of Success and Failure." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 47, 1952.

Griffitt, W. "Interpersonal Attraction as a Function of Self-Concept and Personality Similarity-Dissimilarity." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 4, 1966.

Heider, F. The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations (New York: Wiley, 1958).

Hogan, R. and Mankin, D. "Determinants of Interpersonal Attraction: A Clarification." Psychological Reports, Vol. 26, 1970.

Izard, C.E. "Personality Similarity, Positive Affect and Interpersonal Attraction." Journal of Abnormal Social Psychology, Vol. 61, 1960.

Jones, E.E., Stires, L.K., Shaver, K.G., and Harris, V.A. "Evaluation of an Ingratiator by Target Persons and Bystanders." Journal of Personality, Vol. 36, 1968.

Jones, E.E. and Schrauger, S. "Reputation and Self-Evaluation as Determinants of Attractiveness." Sociometry, Vol. 33, 1970.

Jones, E.E. and Gordon, E.M. "Timing of Self-Disclosure and Its Effects on Personal Attraction." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1972.

Kelly, G.A. A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1955).

Knapp, Mark. "Some Thoughts on the Similarity/Dissimilarity Issue." Paper presented at SCA, Minneapolis, MN, 1978.

Lerner, M.J., Dillehay, R.C., and Sherer, W.C. "Similarity and Attraction in Social Contexts." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 5, 1967.

Lewin, K., Dembo, T., Festinger, L. and Sears, P. "Level of Aspiration," in J. McV. Hunt (Ed.), Personality and the Behavior Disorders, Vol. 1 (New York: Ronald Press, 1944).

Murstein, B.I. "Stimulus-Value-Role: A Theory of Marital Choice." Journal of Marriage and the Family, Vol. 32, 1970.

_____. "Physical Attractiveness and Marital Choice." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 22, 1972.

Newcomb, T.M. "The Prediction of Interpersonal Attraction." American Psychologist, Vol. 11, 1956.

_____. The Acquaintance Process (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961).

O'Keefe, B.J. and Delia, J.G. "Construct Comprehensiveness and Cognitive Complexity as Predictors of the Number and Strategic Adaptation of Arguments and Appeals in a Persuasive Message." Communication Monographs, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1979.

Ritter, E.M. "Social Perspective-Taking Ability, Cognitive Complexity and Listener-Adapted Communication in Early and Late Adolescence." Communication Monographs, Vol. 46, No. 1, 1979.

Rosenthal, R. and Rosnow, R.L. (Eds.) Artefacts in Behavioral Research (New York: Academic Press, 1969).

Rubin, R.B. "Theory and Research on Communication During Initial Interactions." Paper presented at SCA, Minneapolis, MN, 1978.

Ruesch, J. Therapeutic Communication (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1961).

Sermat, V. and Smyth, M. "Content Analysis of Verbal Communication in the Development of a Relationship: Conditions Influencing Self-Disclosure." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1973.

Shaw, M.E. "Implicit Conversion of Fate Control in Dyadic Interaction." Psychological Reports, Vol. 10, 1962.

Shimkunas, A.M. "Demand for Intimate Self-Disclosure and Pathological Verbalizations in Schizophrenia." Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Vol. 80, No. 2, 1972.

Silverman, I. "Physical Attractiveness and Courtship." Sexual Behavior, Vol. 7, 1971.

Simmel, G. The Sociology of Georg Simmel. Translated and edited by K.H. Wolff (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950).

Smith, C.R., Williams, L. and Willis, R.H. "Race, Sex and Belief as Determinants of Friendship Acceptance." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 5, 1967.

Spinner, B. and Colwell, N.L. "Variables Affecting the Perceptions of Self-Disclosure." Catalogue of Selected Documents in Psychology, Vol. 8, 1978.

Stroebe, W., Insko, C.A., Thompson, V.D. and Layton, B.D. "The Effects of Physical Attractiveness, Attitude Similarity and Sex on Various Aspects of Interpersonal Attraction." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 18, 1971.

Thibaut, J.W. and Kelley, H.H. The Social Psychology of Groups (New York: Wiley, 1959).

Willis, R.H. and Joseph, M.L. "Bargaining Behavior I. 'Prominence' as a Predictor of the Outcomes of Games of Agreement." Conflict Resolution, Vol. 3, 1959.

Winch. R.F. Mate Selection: A Study of Complementary Needs (New York: Harper and Row, 1958).

APPENDIX

Summaries of Several Theories of Interpersonal Attraction and Relationship Development

Reciprocity of Liking

This theory stems from Heider's balance theory (1958). The basic tenet of this position holds that we like people who either like us or like the things we like. While balance theory may be intuitively compelling and offer explanatory power that squares with much of our "real life" experiences, as a theory of attraction and relationship developmentit falls short on several counts.

Berscheid and Walster (1969), for example, have demonstrated that liking is not always endearing; Jones and Schrauger (1970) have shown that we must believe ourselves to be likeable in addition to perceiving that we are liked by others; Aronson and Linder (1965) have found that the effect of being liked by others differs depending on the order in which liking and disliking may have been expressed; finally, Jones et al (1968) have discovered that our reactions to being liked by others are affected by our perceptions of their motivations for liking us.

Matching

This theory stems from Lewin et al's Level-of-Aspiration Theory (1944). The most basic assumptions of this theory are that 1) relationships may be viewed as "goals", and 2) the selection of particular goals (in this case, relationships) depends in part on their perceived likelihood of being achieved, and partly on perceptions of their desirability. In research, this position has been most influential in hypothesizing about particular dating choices. For example, Berscheid et al (1971) used this hypothesis to explain their finding that people tend to select for dating partners those whose level of physical attractiveness is similar to their own. This same relationship has

been documented in the research of other investigators, such as Silverman (1971) and Centers (1972) as well. However, since Stroebe et al (1971) have reported that physical attractiveness influences dating choice significantly more than marital choice, it is likely that this particular hypothesis explains only one phase in the process of relationship development. Another major deficiency of this theory is its exclusive applicability to cross-sex romantic relationships.

Stimulus-Value-Role Theory

This theory is developed by Murstein (1970, 1972), who argues that similarity in physical attractiveness does affect marital choice, but that once this factor has influenced a person's selection processes, his or her subsequent search for similarity in values and role compatibility will be an important element in his or her further decision-making. Again, the utility of this theory is severely undermined by its restricted range of applicability to marital relationships.

Complementarity of Needs

This theory of marital choice was suggested by Winch in 1958. Basically, Wince argued that people chose marital partners who complement their own characteristics or needs. Hence, an extroverted person would select an introverted person, and vice versa. Duck observes that this position has often been rather fruitlessly pitted against the next theoretical position, similarity, and plagued as well by semantic confusion among researchers regarding the referents of such concepts as needs, attitudes and personality, such that research claimed to be based on this hypothesis has often been addressed to widely divergent phenomena. However, a more serious charge against the utility

of this theory is one that also applies to the theory of similarity, and thus will be discussed in the next section.

The Similarity Hypothesis

This view argues that people are attracted to and develop relationships with others who are similar to themselves. The underlying assumption of this idea seems to be best expressed by Newcomb (1956), who suggested that interaction will tend to be more rewarding when the interactors are similar, since their similarity will provide social support for each other's attitudes, beliefs and opinions. Similarity of economic status (Byrne, Clore and Worchel, 1966), race (Smith, Williams and Willis, 1967), perceived ability (Gilchrist, 1952), and ego defenses (Cohen, 1967) have all been found to be significantly related to attraction.

However, the majority of the studies of this hypothesis have focused on similarity of attitudes and personality. For example, Newcomb (1961) studied the friendships that developed among 17 male students who lived in a house, rent-free, in exchange for serving as research subjects. He found that proximity accounted for initial attraction, but that perceived similarity of attitudes accounted best for later attraction and friendship development. A string of studies by Byrne and his associates has also lent compelling support for the similarity hypothesis with respect to attitudes. Personality similarity has also been found in some studies to be significantly related to attraction (Griffitt, 1966; Izard, 1960), but the nature of this relationship has vacillated across studies (Byrne, Griffitt and Stefaniak, 1967; Lerner, Dillehay and Sherer, 1967; Hogan and Mankin, 1970).

While the research based on the similarity hypothesis has proven fertile, it is still vulnerable to criticism. Specifically, Knapp (1978) has argued that we need to stop looking at similarity and dissimilarity as being static

across time and people. In addition, in considering the differences between laboratory experiments and actual encounters, he raises several pertinent issues springing from methodological decisions:

a) We don't generally directly explain our attitudes to others, as our instruments in much of this research do

b) We rarely get such information so quickly

c) Subjects in experiments generally only know attitudes, whereas in real life we often know much more about people

d) Strength and centrality of belief may be as important, or more so, than number of attitudes people agree or disagree on

e) Not all relevant information in our assessments of others comes from those others

f) Most of this research has been done on samples of college sophomores - perhaps different life stages lead to different constellations of needs, goals, perceptions of rewards, etc., about which similarity is important

g) Most of these studies look at the effect of similarity on attraction - but attraction may not necessarily lead to the pursuit of a relationship.

Duck cites support for this last proposition in his reference to the research by Hogan and Mankin (1970) and Duck and Spencer (1972). Another unresolved issue surrounding the similarity hypothesis is noted by Crockett (1980). That is, if similarity appears to induce attraction, how can we explain the fact that dissimilarity induces indifference rather than repulsion? Still other issues addressed by Crockett are that similarity and propinquity could easily be confused, and that we need greater specification of the similarity hypothesis in order to account for the inevitability and attractiveness of dissimilarity.

Social Exchange Theory

This theory is based on the work of Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and Altman and Taylor (1973). The most basic assumptions of this theory are that reinforcement is an important determinant of attraction, and that people are attracted to and form relationships with those with whom they perceive relationships to be more rewarding than costly. An important aspect of this model is that decisions about costs and rewards are determined by comparisons with certain internal standards, called the comparison level and comparison level for alternatives by Thibaut and Kelley. An obvious difficulty with this theoretical position is that people will have different internal standards upon which to base their comparisons, and additionally, what one person considers to be rewarding or costly may be radically different from what another person considers to be rewarding or costly. Moreover, several empirical studies have found results opposite to those predicted by exchange theory (Bixenstine, Potash and Wilson, 1963; Shaw, 1962; Willis and Joseph, 1959). In sum, while this particular position makes a lot of explanatory sense, its predictive utility is unremarkable.